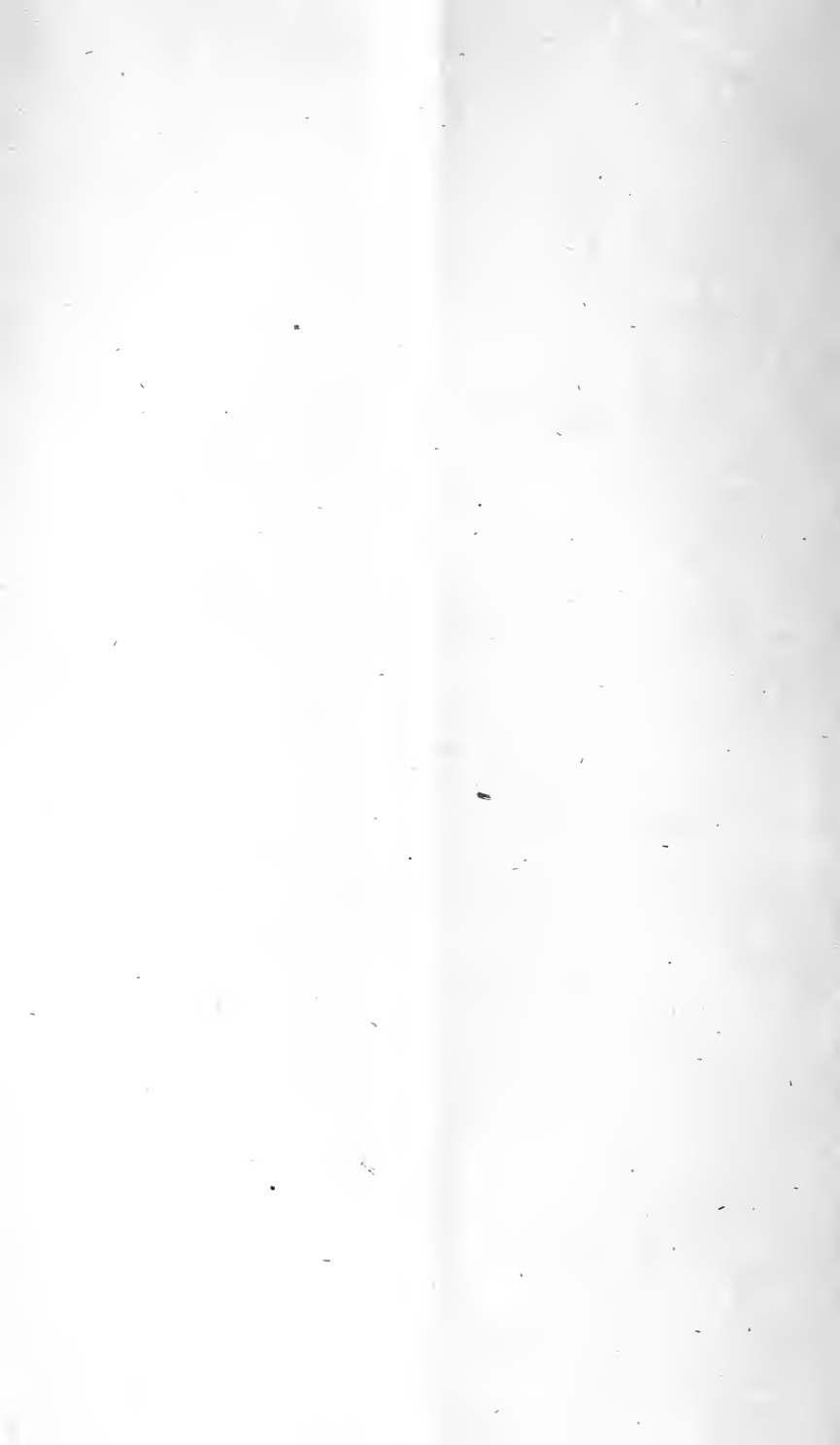

Funeral Address.



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ADDRESS

AT

THE FUNERAL

OF

MRS. ELIZABETH THOMPSON,

ELIOT CHURCH, ROXBURY,

NOVEMBER 26, 1867.

BY

REV. JAMES H. MEANS.

PASTOR OF THE SECOND CHURCH, DORCHESTER.

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A D D R E S S .

BEAUTIFULLY appropriate are those words which have just been read: "THANKS BE TO GOD WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY." Yet it may seem strange that we can call them so. Is not a crumbling body lying there,—the countenance changed, the brightness gone from the beaming eye? It would seem as though it were death's victory, not ours. And how speak of "thanks" at such an hour as this,—surrounded by these badges of mourning, and amid these flowing tears?

Let earthborn thoughts be silenced, and God shall speak: "I heard a voice saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which

die in the Lord." Far off in Jerusalem, in a garden, is a sepulchre, and there, too, lies one in this cold sleep. His form is wounded and marred, and there are those who say, death hath triumphed over him. But wait. The sleeper rises. At his touch the rocky door of the tomb is rolled away. He goes forth; angels rejoice at his re-appearing, and his disciples wipe away their tears; in a little while he ascends to glory. "As Jesus died and rose again, even so them also who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." "Because He lives, we shall live also."

Shall we not then, even here, give thanks for such a victory? Think how men have trembled before the "king of terrors;" how monarchs on their thrones have dreaded his approach; how many through fear of

death have been all their lifetime subject to bondage. Yet the Christian may bid him defiance.

Still, it is not for *death* that we give thanks. Alas! our hearts are indeed heavy to-day, aching with a common grief. One who has moved among us with sweet gentleness, and loving devotion to the duties of domestic and social life; one who, as a Christian, could bear the most watchful scrutiny as few others could, has suddenly passed away, and we feel the void in our homes and in our hearts. Our tears must flow, and He who wept at the grave in Bethany will not forbid them.

But we do wrong if we think only of our loss. It is not fitting for Christians to look down into the grave, as though all their hopes were buried there. "Sursum

corda,"—Lift up your hearts. Follow the Forerunner in his upward flight. He hath entered heaven, and the door is left open, that his friends may enter also. Jesus Christ "hath abolished death."

She, whom we mourn, is not dead. When, on the morning of the Sabbath,—best of all days for the Christian's departure,—while we were singing God's praises in the sanctuary,

"Her spirit, at a bound,
Left the encumbering clay,"

was it not to join at once in a more rapturous song with the myriads before the throne? She delighted in the Lord's day, and the congregation of his saints; but what Sabbath was ever so joyful to her as this, which dawned upon her while she lay prostrate in weakness and pain, and left

her in the brightness of a light that shall never fade, and the ecstasy of a worship that will never cease?

Those powers, also, which she employed so unostentatiously, yet so faithfully; that loving heart; that gentle spirit, "touched to the finest issues;" that quick, bright intelligence; that reverent and lowly temper, which made her feel the need and so rejoice in the privilege of daily devotion,—have these perished? Or did the arrows of death glance off from them, unable to pierce to their deep hiding-place?

There are duties in heaven for loving, reverent spirits like hers. Such are not metamorphosed,—only purified, exalted, expanded. Humanity is not annihilated,—it is glorified; and as Moses was to make the earthly tabernacle "according to the pat-

tern showed to him in the mount," so may we look in the future world for the higher archetypes of all the services to which we here are called.

She still loves, with an affection even more glowing than she ever felt before; she still searches into the "sweet wonders of the Cross,"—but, oh, with what deeper penetration! she still worships,—but not with tearful penitence now,—with no mingling of doubt, no girding of a fainting spirit to take hold on God; for she sees Him as he is, and cannot mistake the smile of that blessed Saviour who is before the throne.

I said that we could not give thanks for death; but I am almost ready to recall the word: for if only by death we can attain this blessedness and life, why should we

not welcome it? Death, in Christ, is not death,—that reconciles the difficulty.

“Is that a death-bed where the Christian lies?

Yes, but not his; 'tis death itself there dies.”

My beloved brother: Our hearts all go out to you in deepest, most tender love. We feel how crushing to you must be the burden of this grief. Ah, you are not alone in it! And as you have been the comforter of many, as you have pointed a larger congregation than your own to the “Better Land,” so now, the sympathy you have so often and freely given is returned to you. In these homes, where you have commended other troubled souls to the “God of all consolation,” prayers have been going up for you, and to-day your people throng

around to bless you with mingling tears, as they have themselves been blessed.

You will not wish me to lift, for more than a moment, the veil which hides the sanctuary of home. Choosing her, whom you have lost, for a companion,—attracted not more by the natural loveliness of her character, than by the evident sincerity and depth of her Christian faith,—you found in her all that you looked for, and even more. Her piety seemed only more true and devout when you came to know her intimately. Her gentle cheerfulness was a constant solace. Closely did she draw to herself your children, and faithfully fill a mother's place. Her sound judgment well fitted her to preside over the household, while the law of kindness in her heart and on her

tongue made her useful and greatly beloved as a pastor's wife.

Hers was indeed an unobtrusive excellence. No ambition ever throbbed in that modest heart for the world's gaze and applause; but how diligently in her chosen path were a thousand words of kindness spoken and acts of service done, so that those who knew her best, loved her most!

One of our poets has described such a life in words which may not unfitly be applied to her: —

“ She doeth little kindnesses,
Which most leave undone or despise;
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
And giveth happiness and peace,
Is low esteeméd in her eyes.

“ Blessing she is; God made her so,
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her noiseless as the snow;
Nor hath she ever chanced to know
That aught were easier than to bless.”

Truly such a wife "is from the Lord." "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away," and his grace will enable you and your children, and those who mourn for a daughter and a sister, to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Dear friends of the Eliot Church and congregation: You are bereaved also. One who often prayed with and for you,—who as a sympathizing friend bore the burden of your sorrows and cares,—who in her daily life gave a bright example of consistent piety,—has ceased from her work among you.

I was about to say, has *ended* her work; but I rejoice to feel that it is not so. These nine years of intercourse are to be prolonged by many more years of remembrance.

We do not bury her influence to-day. Cherish the memory of every sweet Christian grace and word and service.

I have been told that she shrank with peculiar sensitiveness from ever speaking against another ; she would cover even faults with tenderness. Learn to copy that charity. Some of you were her scholars in the Sabbath school, and the wreath you have placed upon her bier is a pleasant token of your gratitude. Remember the lessons she gave, long after these flowers have faded.

“The seed is not quickened except it die ;” and so the beauty and power of a modest life like hers is felt only when death has set upon it his seal. Truly it is well for us thus in thought to recall the departed.

“Yet not as in the days
Of earthly ties we love them,
For they are touched with rays
From light which is above them;
Another sweetness shines
Around their well-known features,
God with His glory signs
His dearly ransomed creatures.

“Dear dead, they are become
Like guardian angels to us;
And distant heaven, like home,
Through them begins to woo us.
Love, that was earthly, wings
Its flight to holier places;
The dead are sacred things
That multiply our graces.”

And now, “dust unto dust.” The grave waits for its tenant. We give up that which is earthly, — this wasted form, this perishing clay. We give it into *His* keeping, who sees here the hidden germ of the spiritual body of the resurrection. He will

keep watch and ward, though the dark shades of night fall, and chill autumnal and winter winds sweep by.

Only a few moments before the ear lost its power of hearing, she heard from a daughter's lips (who knew not that she was "doing it for the burial"), that Psalm which contains the words, most fitting of all Scripture for such an hour: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me." Jesus was near her then. He weeps with us to-day in tender sympathy. He will go forth with us to the grave, and receive this new charge which we commit to his gracious care. "THANKS," once again, "TO GOD, WHO GIVETH US THE VICTORY."

